

**COMMISSION ON AGING
MEETING SUMMARY MINUTES
Dennis and Phil Ratner Museum**

April 28, 2011

Members Present	Members Absent
Elaine Binder	Tammy Duell
Elizabeth Brooks-Evans	Chuck Kauffman
Myrna Cooperstein	Nhora Murphy
Morton A. Davis	Mona Negm
John Honig	John (Jack) Sprague
Vivien Hsueh	
Miriam Kelty	Liaisons
Judith Levy	Pazit Aviv, Housing Opportunities Commission
Leslie Marks	Austin Heyman, Office of Community Partnerships
Ken Montgomery	Matthew Kelleher, MC Fire and Rescue
Barbara Mulitz	
Rudy Oswald	Guests
Joe Petrizzo	Irwin Goldbloom
Marcia Pruzan	Sarah Gotbaum
Spencer Schron	Sam Korper, Commission on Health
Beth Shapiro	Seth Morgan, Commission on People in Disabilities
Robert (Bob) Tiller	Rick Nelson, Department of Housing & Community Affairs
Judith Welles	Susan I. Wranik, GROWS
Grace Whipple	
	Staff:
Members Absent	Odile Saddi
Alicia Bazan-Jimenez	Sharon Briggs
Paul DelPonte	

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

John Honig motioned to approve the May 2011 COA meeting minutes; Miriam Kelty seconded and Commission on Aging (COA) members approved the minutes unanimously.

COA REPORTS

Pledge 25: John Honig

John Honig announced that 76%, or 19 of 25 COA members reported contributing 497 volunteer hours, which extrapolates to about 650 hours for all 25 members of COA, to COA activities during March 2011. The Chair asked John to submit the Commission's volunteer hours to the *County Pledge 25 Initiative*. Commission members spend an enormous amount of time volunteering, and the Chair, Elaine Binder, thanked members for their hard work.

04/24/11 Joint Boards/Commissions Meeting with HHS Director – Marcia Pruzan

At the Chair's request, Marcia Pruzan attended the joint HHS Commission's chairs meeting with the HHS Director, Uma Ahluwalia.

1. Most attendees were pleased with the content and liked the format of the County Executive's recent town hall meeting; although one attendee preferred the earlier a 3-minute time limit on presentations.
2. Local, state, and federal funding are still very uncertain. However, state budget cuts to HHS were less severe than envisioned. Federal budget cuts, which may not be entirely known until fall, remain the biggest concern.
3. Painful budget cuts will continue. The County now does "less with less" and this means that fewer people are being served and more are on waiting lists. Many clients are experiencing painful service cuts, such as chore services and dental programs for seniors. However, a large number of items are on the County Council's reconciliation list.
4. The HHS Director urged more collaboration among boards and commissions; she praised some that that already do this well, including the COA in its work with the Commission on Health and the Commission on People with Disabilities.
5. Other reports of interest to the COA included:
 - The Commission on People with Disabilities has been focusing on parking issues, which include illegally use of hang tags that belong to other people with disabilities (or in some cases are deceased!), the need for clearly stated Ride-On announcements for passengers with limited or no vision, and the problem of physicians approving applications for hang tags for people without medical necessity.
 - *Montgomery Cares* has enough funding to meet its current patient load this fiscal year but remains concerned about the future. A proposal to charge \$25 per visit has been under consideration; however, this charge might keep poorer people from seeking preventive care until they become sicker and require more care.
 - The Community Action Board remains concerned about reductions in antipoverty funding and staffing.
 - The Mental Health Committee invited everyone to the May 12 Mental Health Open House at the Executive Office Building cafeteria from 5pm to 8:30 pm.
6. Because many boards and commissions are uncertain as to what they can and cannot legally do, the HHS Director announced that:
 - At the June meeting, the County Attorney will clarify terms such as "advocacy" and "lobbying" and activities in which boards and commissions may and may not legally undertake. Prior to the meeting, the HHS Director will distribute a chart identifying which HHS-related boards and commissions are authorized to lobby; she asked that board and commission representatives bring their charter to the June Meeting.
 - At the September meeting there will be a presentation on *Healthy Montgomery*.

Senior Health and Wellness– Judy Levy

The Committee supports the work of the Commission on People with Disabilities in the area of handicapped parking. Mike Subin is leading a work group with the Police Department to address a number of related issues. A motion was put forth and adopted unanimously for the COA to send a letter to the County Executive urging him to address these issues. There has been a request that a member of the COA serve on that work group. Interested COA members should inform Odile Saddi.

COA Chair's Report- Elaine Binder

The meetings with County Council Members or designated staff members went well. Council Members were positive and supportive. Council members expressed concern about the same issues as the COA: housing, transportation, and mental health. One positive outcome is that the Council's Health and Human Services Committee has placed the proposed reduction of \$100,000 in-home care services on the list to be restored. The committee recommended this be done in two \$50,000 increments, provided resources are available. It is clear that the COA's message on this critical program was heard.

Although the COA supported the nomination of Senator Karen Montgomery for the Maryland's Department of Aging Award, she was not selected.

COA members are urged to attend the COA annual meeting on May 26. It will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Silver Spring Civic Center. Mr. Leggett will address the COA at 9:00 a.m., followed by DHHS Director Ahluwalia and guest speaker, futurist David Pearce Snyder, who is expected to engage attendees in a lively discussion. The COA will then select its 2011 summer study topics.

The Executive Committee will provide breakfast. Each attending COA member should provide Grace Whipple with a \$15 check made payable to the Commission on Aging to cover the cost of the lunch. Sharon Briggs will email members clear information on driving and parking for the meeting.

Committees as well as individual members should submit summer study proposals to Odile and Elaine by May 13th. A selection criteria sheet will be distributed to the COA prior to the May meeting.

The criteria for selection of summer studies include:

- The issue is related to seniors and identifies a positive impact;
- There is a reasonable expectation of success within the timeframe of three summer meetings;
- The study is relevant to the COA's mission
- The COA has access to expertise in this area;
- The proposal offers opportunities to collaborate with other groups.

General Assembly Report – Bob Tiller

Building relationships with our Delegates and Senators in Annapolis is critical and goes a long way to moving issues of concern forward. Everything is fast paced, as the legislative session lasts only 90 days from early January to mid-April. During this past legislative session, the COA identified five bills for support. Of those five bills, three have passed both houses and are expected to be signed by the governor:

1. *Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment order (MOLST)*. This bill was adopted 6 months after the COA researched and reported on the topic as part of our 2010 Summer Studies. The COA thanked Tammy Duell for her testimony on this bill.
2. *Communities for a Lifetime*. This bill had been introduced in 2010. For the 2011 session, Jack Sprague met with Senator Milton, after which the bill was reworded and strengthened. The bill places responsibility on local jurisdictions for planning and building communities for aging in place and community in Maryland.
3. *Privacy of Senior Center Participant Information*. Nancy King was a key leader on this bill. Prior to the bill's passage, a loophole in the Public Information Act allowed anyone to go to a government-operated Senior Center and ask for information about program participants. Once the governor signs the bill, private information about seniors who attend senior centers cannot be released. The COA thanked Grace Whipple for testifying twice in one day in support of this bill.

Although these three bills passed with overwhelming majorities in both houses, two other COA-supported bills introduced by Senator Jamie Raskin of Montgomery County did not:

1. *Financial Crimes*. A Seizure and Forfeiture bill was first introduced in 2010. Although Senator Raskin worked hard on this bill, it was defeated.
2. *Permanent Absentee Ballot*. This bill extends to all state residents, not just seniors. While there was support for this bill, several counties were concerned about timelines for implementation. It is expected that this bill will be reintroduced next year and that it will have a good chance for success, as counties will have more preparation time. Several states have already implemented this type of bill.

With COA approval, Elaine Binder will write a letter thanking Jack Sprague for his work on behalf of the COA. Sam Korper asked that appreciation of the Commission on Health be included in the letter. Elaine Binder thanked all Commissioners for their work during this session.

Guest Speaker – Rick Nelson, Director of Montgomery County’s Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA)

The Department’s responsibilities include the Community Development Block Grant program, Housing Code Enforcement, Landlord and Tenant Affairs, the County’s affordable housing trust fund and the County’s Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program. Mr. Nelson indicated that the County’s housing program is very well respected around the country.

This is a good time to discuss housing issues for seniors. The Organizational Reform Commission, assigned jointly by the Council and the County Executive, recently submitted recommendations. They had identified what appeared to be an overlap in function between the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) and the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) and suggested that the two agencies could be combined. However, because HOC owns property and issues its own bonds, it could be difficult to merge these functions within County government. HOC has indicated not favoring this “blending.” However, there may be possible savings and/or improved services in office functions.

After submission of recommendations, the County Executive had 30 days to accept or reject them. He submitted 28 recommendations to the County Council; at the time of this meeting, the County Council has not acted on his recommendations. The County Council was expected to take action on these recommendations by May 10th. (The Council, on May 16) rejected the recommendation to blend DHCA and HOC)

Foreclosure in the County remains a serious issue, with 22,000 homes in the foreclosure process since the beginning of the recession. In addition, seniors are being targeted in scams related to reverse mortgages. Mr. Nelson asked the COA to help share the message that if it is too good to be true, it is not true. Free home ownership counseling programs, which are funded by the county and the state, are located in Wheaton, Gaithersburg, and Germantown. People are urged to seek guidance from these no-cost services.

Mr. Nelson explained a proposal under informal discussion by the Council for new housing units to be developed with 50% “visitability” (zero entry steps, a wide door entrance and an accessible bathroom on the main level) and 25% “livability” (zero entry steps, an accessible bathroom, a wide door entrance, and kitchen and laundry accessible on the main floor). The County has had a voluntary program for new construction since 2007. Thus far, 45 new homes have been built with visitability standards. It was noted that accessible units are not always easy to rent or sell. Thus, more publicity about the program is

needed, and both the disability and senior communities need to be engaged with the building industry. In light of the recession, there is also a need to be more proactive in ensuring a match between existing affordable, accessible units and people who need them.

Housing is a major issue in the County, especially with the current evaluation of incentives for increased density in commercial and residential zones. There is a new mix of commercial and residential zoning and a need to maximize affordable senior-friendly housing. While the redevelopment of White Flint should present a good opportunity for affordable senior-friendly housing, it has not been under discussion.

Mr. Nelson concurred that “Aging in Place” really means aging in the community, and not necessarily in the same house where an individual may have lived for years. He asked for COA feedback about the preference for seniors to live in senior-segregated communities versus age-integrated communities.

This fall, the County Council will update its 2001 Housing Policy. HOC receives \$6 million from the County to operate housing services. In addition, the issue of accessory dwelling is controversial and COA feedback on this issue would be helpful. Currently, DHCA is updating this policy and will submit recommendations to the Council in early September. Mr Nelson urged the COA to provide feedback by in early September prior to Council action.

Clarification is needed on zoning requirements for Senior Group Homes where three or four seniors share a home with a caregiver. Mr Nelson will follow up on this and provide information to the COA.

It is possible that a new senior development will be developed along with a new police station in the third police district at the corner of New Hampshire Avenue and Route 29. The process of developing affordable housing is not easy in the County. An earlier attempt to develop affordable multi-family homes was met with considerable community opposition. Another senior housing facility is being planned on County owned property behind the County Council Office Building on Fleet Street in Rockville. This project has been subject to litigation because of community opposition and is under appeal with the Court of Appeals. In both cases, Victory Housing is planning a new low-income senior housing facility and will apply for federal funds.

A question was raised about effects of the FY2011 Federal Budget cuts on the community. Montgomery County has lost \$890,000 in federal funding this year for building rehabilitation and special needs housing. This unfortunately comes at the same time that the County has to reduce its own resources. Overall, housing funds have decreased from \$56 million to \$30 million in the past 3 years. As a result, there is an urgent need to strengthen collaboration between the public, nonprofit and private sectors.

Liaisons reports

- Vivien Hsueh reminded COA members that her second term expires at the end of this year and a new COA member is needed to replace her on the Recreation Department Advisory Committee. Interested members should let her know so as to ensure a smooth transition.
- Matthew Kelleher from the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Department reported waiting for the Governor’ signature on HB621, a fire safety measure for residents with mobility limitations who live in high-rise residential apartments. The new law would require property managers to send a notice to those with mobility limitations when a unit becomes available on the first floor level, so that they could choose to relocate to the first floor.

The Senior Safety Advisory Group of the Senior Subcabinet (including Police, Fire, Homeland Security, and Consumer Protection staff) is developing a survey to determine how safe seniors feel. They currently are drafting questions and asking for input. The Fire Department is working with Rebuilding Together to provide 30 homes with free smoke alarms and an escape plan.

- Austin Heyman, with the Office of Community Partnerships, shared his congratulations with the COA for their impressive number of volunteer hours and the tremendous impact of its work. Irwin Goldbloom, former COA Chair, joined in congratulating the COA.
- COH liaison Sam Korper reminded the Commission that a few years ago the COH and COA began working together on the “File of Life” that led to a Summer Study and the COA’s “End of Life” work. Sam gave kudos to this Commission for sparking that issue. It is also a testament to how multiple commissions can collaborate very successfully. The COH has worked for 6 months now on disability parking issues. Multiple commissions working together do reinforce each other’s strengths.
- Seth Morgan, with the Commission on People with Disabilities, presented that Commission’s priorities: transportation, parking, and housing. He concurred that commissions often have many issues and common and become more powerful when working together.
- Pazit Aviv with Resident Services, Housing Opportunities Commission. The Hoarding Task Force in Gaithersburg has received some grant funding to assist three individuals. Support group sessions for family members have recently ended, with eight of twelve individuals who began the course completing it.
- Susan Wranik from GROWS presented the GROWS testimony to Council this month. She has scheduled a meeting with the COA Chair to further explore collaborative efforts.
- Leslie Marks reported on behalf of the Vital Living Committee. The “Adopt a Library” project is under way: libraries and VLC volunteers are creating sections in libraries for information and community outreach geared to people ages 50+. The Vital Living Committee also testified before the County Council.
- Morton A. Davis, COA liaison to the Commission on Home Care commented on the proposed budget cut of \$100,000 and expressed hope that the two installments of \$50,000 will be feasible. Home care on the private market costs between \$18 and \$24 per hour. Please contact Morton with any questions for the Home Care Commission at MortonADavis@comcast.net.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Aging in Place and the Community- Beth Shapiro and Grace Whipple.

The Committee is discussing a Summer Study proposal and the need for input and suggestions on housing policies and regulations that are important for seniors. The Committee will examine the recent Villages survey results that focused on major issues of isolation, errands, and chores. Elaine Binder will meet with Jay Kenney and Odile Saddi about ways to move forward on the COA’s priority for developing a County transportation policy with the private sector.

Morton Davis worked with the transportation summer study last year with Leslie Marks and Beth Shapiro. He now serves on a transportation committee at Leisure World. Although a first attempt to get Ride-On into Leisure World was denied, Marian Albright, Chairman of the Board of Leisure World, is making progress on bringing Ride-On into Leisure World.

One of the long-term goals for Ride-On is to support regular ridership. The County's goal over the next several years is to develop Rapid Transit for major transportation arteries; a longer-term goal is to incorporate use of Ride-On on those arteries.

Communication and Community Outreach – Judy Welles and Spencer Schron

In April the CCO committee focused on communication strategies with COA Stakeholders. The Committee is in the process of expanding the Stakeholders list to faith-based communities, chambers of commerce, and other groups. Mona Negm has direct contact with Fernandez Toras, who has expertise on reaching diverse communities. The CCO is hoping that a special meeting in October can focus on this important area.

The Committee has recommended and drafted talking points to use in speaking with different Stakeholder groups. Feedback on the draft is welcomed. In addition, please visit the recently updated COA website (montgomerycountymd.gov/coa), and provide feedback to Odile.

The City of Gaithersburg has scheduled its Third Annual Active Aging Expo on May 2. The COA will share a table with HHS at the Expo.

Senior Health and Wellness Committee – Judy Levy

The April 7th event sponsored by the End-of-Life group and the COA was highly successful. With standing room only, more than 130 attendees celebrated National Health Care Decision Day. Credit goes to Shawn Brennan for a terrific job!

Tammy Duell and Shawn Brennan met with Dr. Ulder J. Tillman, County Health Officer, to discuss the upcoming proclamation on the Bill of Rights for End of Life Care. Judy believes a draft proclamation has been submitted to the County Council.

The Health and Wellness Committee is working on a Summer Study topic of "Behavioral and Mental Health." COA input is welcomed.

Public Policy Committee– Bob Tiller

State Legislation has been a priority, along with the COA's April visits with County Council Members. With guidance from Rudy Oswald, Elaine Binder sent letters to two Montgomery County representatives in the U.S. Congress detailing the COA's concerns about the proposed federal budget cuts. In addition, Leslie Marks is developing a Summer Study proposal related to senior housing availability, accessibility, and visibility.

Seniors Today- Marcia Pruzan will be leaving the COA at the end of the year when her second term expires. COA members interested in serving should contact her to ensure a smooth transition. The *Seniors Today* topics are listed monthly on the COA calendar.

New Business

Ratner Museum – Stella Bernstein, Executive Director of the Ratner Museum

Stella Bernstein provided a brief history of the museum, which is owned by cousins Dennis and Philip Ratner. Phil Rather is a renowned sculptor who created many sculptures, including one at the base of the Statue of Liberty, the Panda Bear at the entrance of the National Zoo, one at Montgomery General hospital, and another locally in the lobby of the University of Maryland.

The museum exhibits national, state, and local artists and all ethnic persuasions, with shows changing monthly. (The Museum is closed only in August.) Entrance and tours are free, and the facility is accessible to persons with disabilities. For more information, visit the Dennis and Philip Ratner Museum website: <http://www.ratnermuseum.com/>.

Respectfully Submitted,
Marcia Pruzan
Secretary